

# DATING MATTERS®

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE HEALTHY TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

## DATING MATTERS YOUTH PROGRAMS: AT-A-GLANCE

The **Dating Matters Youth Programs**—one component of the Dating Matters comprehensive prevention model—provide middle school students with the knowledge and social-emotional skills they need to identify and engage in healthy, safe relationships. Healthy relationship attitudes and behaviors start developing early. Research shows that supporting healthy emotional development can prevent a wide variety of negative outcomes, including teen dating violence.

Dating Matters includes three programs designed for youth in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades to:

- support their social-emotional health,
- reinforce positive, nonviolent attitudes and behaviors, and
- foster the development of healthy, safe relationships before dating begins.

## HOW WILL YOUTH BENEFIT FROM THE PROGRAMS?

The Dating Matters Youth Programs teach skills and knowledge to promote respectful, nonviolent dating relationships through strong parent-child communication and relationships. By using a mixture of information sharing, discussion, role play, and group exercises, these programs aim to improve student knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding teen dating violence and healthy relationships.

## WHAT ARE THE DATING MATTERS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS?

Dating Matters includes three grade-specific (6th, 7th, and 8th), school-based programs that teach youth to identify and develop the skills and behaviors that lead to safe and healthy relationships while recognizing and avoiding actions that could lead to teen dating violence.

- **Dating Matters for 6th Graders** is designed to provide youth with opportunities to learn and enhance relationship skills in an engaging and non-threatening manner. Through seven 50-minute sessions, youth learn about healthy teen dating relationships by first exploring what it means to have healthy friendships. CDC developed Dating Matters for 6th Graders as part of the Dating Matters comprehensive prevention model.

### Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships

is a comprehensive teen dating violence prevention model. Dating Matters focuses on 11- to 14-year-olds and is based on the best available evidence on what works to prevent teen dating violence. It includes multiple components that target individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. These components work together to promote respectful, nonviolent teen dating relationships.

In addition to these Youth Programs, the Dating Matters model also includes:

- Capacity Assessment and Planning Tool
- Parent Programs
- Guide to Informing Policy
- Training for Educators
- i2i Youth Communications Program
- Guide to Using Indicator Data



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- **Dating Matters for 7th Graders** reinforces the information and skills developed in the 6th grade program. There are seven 50-minute sessions with modules that provide further information on sexual violence, teen dating safety, and relationship rights, as well as access to supportive resources. CDC developed Dating Matters for 7th Graders as part of the Dating Matters comprehensive prevention model.
- **Safe Dates** is an evidence-based program delivered in 8th grade that builds upon the skills and knowledge students learned in the Dating Matters programs for 6th and 7th grade. **Safe Dates** is an evidence-based program delivered in 8th grade that builds upon the skills and knowledge students learned in the Dating Matters programs for 6th and 7th grade. This 10-session program is designed to be delivered in the classroom and includes a school-wide poster contest and play. Safe Dates was developed by researchers and **was found to be effective** in preventing teen dating violence perpetration and victimization when students were re-assessed four years after participation.
- **Build Knowledge** by educating youth on:
  - healthy, unhealthy, and unsafe teen dating relationships,
  - warning signs for unhealthy teen dating behavior, and
  - the role of technology in teen dating (texting, social media, etc.).
- **Take Action** to promote the growth of healthy relationships and discourage engagement in unhealthy and unsafe relationships.
- **Empower youth to:**
  - trust in what they know,
  - listen to their inner voice instead of outside pressures, and
  - define their own healthy and safe boundaries and comfort levels in teen dating relationships.
- **Access Resources** by directing youth to people who can help them navigate their teen dating relationships (e.g., trusted adults) and provide resources (e.g., hotlines, websites) for more information.

## HOW IS EACH PROGRAM DELIVERED?

Dating Matters includes three universal, classroom-delivered programs developed for students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. The programs consist of 7 to 10 weekly or bi-weekly sessions, each carried out during the school year by teachers, school staff, or outside program facilitators who are coordinated by the local health department or a community organization. The **Dating Matters Guide to Implementation** provides more detailed information on program delivery.

	Dating Matters for 6th Graders	Dating Matters for 7th Graders	Safe Dates
<b>Total sessions</b>	7 sessions	7 sessions	10 sessions
<b>Session length</b>	50 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes
<b>Other components</b>	None	None	School-wide play and poster contest
<b>Session topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Healthy relationships</li> <li>● Understanding feelings</li> <li>● Staying in control of feelings &amp; making healthy decisions</li> <li>● Healthy communication</li> <li>● Unhealthy &amp; unsafe relationships</li> <li>● Staying safe in relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Healthy relationships</li> <li>● Understanding feelings</li> <li>● Staying in control of feelings &amp; making healthy decisions</li> <li>● Healthy communication</li> <li>● Unhealthy &amp; unsafe relationships</li> <li>● Sexual violence &amp; dating safety</li> <li>● Relationship rights &amp; getting help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Caring relationships</li> <li>● Dating abuse</li> <li>● Skills to help friends</li> <li>● Overcoming gender stereotypes</li> <li>● Skills to recognize and handle anger</li> <li>● Effective communication skills</li> <li>● Preventing sexual assault</li> </ul>

## STAFFING

Multiple staff are important to implementing the Dating Matters Youth Programs as part of the Dating Matters comprehensive prevention model—from a Prevention Lead who coordinates all activities at the community level to Dating Matters coaches and program facilitators who carry out the programs with youth. The key responsibilities and skill sets for each of the staff roles are described below. The Dating Matter Guide to Implementation provides more detail on each of these roles.

- **Prevention Lead:** Prevention Leads should have the skills and experience to oversee comprehensive prevention activities and engage community stakeholders in teen dating violence prevention.
  - Oversees the initial set up of Dating Matters at the health department or community-based organization level
  - Enhances the community’s capacity to implement teen dating violence prevention programs
  - Recruits and builds relationships with local schools
  - Engages community stakeholders and partners through a community advisory board
  - Supervises coaches and youth program facilitators
  - Monitors the budget and ensures sustainability
- **Youth Program Facilitator:** Youth program facilitators should have experience and skills working with youth, especially teens, to provide health education and facilitate an engaging, open dialogue about difficult topics. Teachers, school staff, or community-based health educators can deliver youth programs in the classroom.
  - Completes facilitator training
  - Engages in ongoing efforts with the Dating Matters Coach to improve program quality and fidelity
  - Delivers session content to youth
- **Dating Matters Coach:** Coaches are staff of the health department or community organization overseeing Dating Matters who are responsible for supervising and supporting youth and parent program facilitators. Coaches should have experience providing health education to youth and supervising prevention program implementation.
  - Supervises and supports youth program facilitators
  - Oversees access to facilitator training and program materials for youth program facilitators
  - Completes in-person interactive portions of training for youth program facilitators
  - Observes youth program facilitators and provides ongoing feedback and skill development in program facilitation
  - Completes fidelity checks to ensure adherence to session content

## FACILITATOR TRAINING

Organizations can access free training for Dating Matters coaches and youth program facilitators through the [Dating Matters Toolkit](#) website. Facilitator certification is required to start the Dating Matters Youth Program. Facilitator training, including online modules and in-person supplemental activities with a Dating Matters Coach, should take about 10 hours.

## PROGRAM MATERIALS

The CDC provides all materials needed to carry out Dating Matters Youth Programs (6th and 7th Grade) at no cost. Printing costs, estimated below, may apply. Materials include:

- Youth Program Facilitator Guides
- Youth Handbooks
- Coaches’ Playbook

**Safe Dates** (8th grade) materials are available for purchase from the publisher (<http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/safedates.page>). Price estimates are provided below.

For more detailed information on accessing or ordering Dating Matters program materials, please see CDC’s [Dating Matters Toolkit website](#).

## FACILITY NEEDS

All sessions for the Dating Matters Youth Programs can be held in a school classroom setting with access to projection equipment.

## COST

Dating Matters Youth Program implementation costs can vary by community depending on staffing, administrative, facility, and printing costs as well as the number of students and classrooms served.



Type of Cost	Specific Costs	Estimated Cost
Staffing	Prevention Lead	1 full-time employee per community <sup>1</sup>
	Coach	1 full-time employee per community <sup>1</sup>
	Youth Program Facilitators	1 full-time employee per 5-10 schools
Program Materials	<b>Dating Matters Youth Programs (6th/7th Grade)</b>	
	Youth Handbooks	\$1.50/youth participant per program to self-print (b/w)
	Facilitator Guides	Free print copies available from CDC
	<b>Safe Dates (8th Grade)</b>	
	Program Materials	\$245/facilitator
	Youth Handouts	\$1.50/youth participant to self-print (b/w)
	Facilitator Guide	\$6.50/facilitator to self-print (b/w)
Facilitator Training	Online Training Course	Free
	Staff Time	Approx. 10 hours
Facilities	School Classrooms	No additional cost

See the **Dating Matters Guide to Implementation** for more detailed guidance on staffing recommendations and budgeting.

<sup>1</sup> Only one Prevention Lead and Coach are needed per community; these costs are not replicated for each component.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT DATING MATTERS!

The Dating Matters Toolkit—with all of the materials, guidance, and tools you need to implement Dating Matters—is available on CDC’s VetoViolence website at [vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/dating-matters-toolkit](https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/dating-matters-toolkit). The Toolkit is your one-stop-shop for everything Dating Matters.